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Notes and Queries.

THE PHYSIOGNOTRACE.—It has been customary from time immemorial to make and value profile likenesses, either by means of the shadow of the living face, steadied by a wine glass against a sheet of paper on the wall, or by a pencil-sketch from a competent hand, and more often by the fortuitous success of a pair of scissors, guided by a practised hand, instigated by an affectionate heart—these are called *Silhouettes*. It is surprising how often we have seen this done, twisting and turning the blank paper, as if by intuition. One of the most successful operators in this art was *Monsieur Edouard*, a gentleman of fine taste, who added well-drawn and appropriate back-grounds to his characteristic whole-length figures, rendering himself popular and fashionable by a proud display of diamond snuff-boxes and rings, presented to him by several European Sovereigns. He travelled in style through the United States, disposing collateral of some valuable Paintings by the old masters, which he had picked up in his travels through Europe.

Another distinguished personage, *Monsieur St. Memin*, was much patronized for a more extensive performance. He was a gentleman of fortune, and had acquired a fine talent in drawing profiles the size of life, with black and white crayon on roseate paper. They were rendered more than usually correct by the use of some mechanical means employed by him to secure the exact proportions of the features. These profiles were generally framed, under glass, and preserved in many families, even where more costly portraits were to be seen. But his chief purpose and talent lay in executing engravings, copied of a small size from his large drawings. They were executed with a delicate hand, and beautifully shaded by the process of *fine rollers*. Twenty-five dollars insured a large drawing and the copper-plate with twelve impressions.

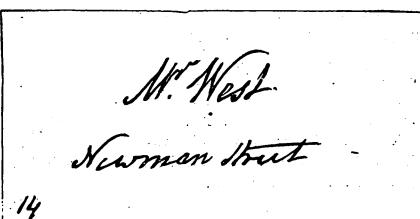
It was in the year 1801, stimulated by the fashion of getting profile likenesses, that Isaac Hawkins, an ingenious Englishman naturalized as an American citizen, invented a machine by which any steady hand in a few moments could produce a correct *indented* outline, to be cut out with fine scissors, to be framed over black paper.

Hawkins at this time was assisting my father in the construction of a chamber organ; and cooperating with him in the invention of a machine (*the Polygraph*), for writing two or more letters at the same time. This was effected by a combination of parallel rods, so suspended as to admit of the free motion of duplicate pens to and from the inkstands and over the paper; my father, subsequently rendered this device more perfect, and he took great pride in having it finished by the best workmen, under his own roof—it was his *hobby* at the time. Mr. Jefferson was among the earliest to be supplied with the Polygraph, and with it kept regular copies of every letter. Some elegantly finished instruments were by him sent as presents to foreign personages: and a splendid one, mounted in silver, to the Dey of Algiers.

Mr. Hawkins at that time invented and brought into use the machine for ruling pale lines on writing paper. On leaving his shop one evening, accompanied by him, an idea occurred to me which I wished to note down, but having no pencil, I borrowed his and in the twilight made my note and handed him his *blunt* pencil—saying “I wish you ingenious men would invent a pencil that would not require sharpening.” We had not proceeded more than a hundred yards, when he said to me,

“I’ve got your pencil.” I replied, “No, but I borrowed and returned yours.” The next morning he showed me his first conception of the *ever-point-pencil*. He had taken the lead out of a common pencil, filed it round and inserted it into a small brass tube, with a spiral spring to press it forward. He afterwards brought it to its present perfection, and in 1802 took out his patent in London, and sold his right for this and the Polygraph to Mr. Farthing.

On his arrival in London, in 1802, I introduced him to Mr. West, and assisted him in putting up his Physiognotrace in the artist’s gallery, and the profile of Mr. West was the *first* which was drawn by that instrument in London—the following is a copy of that Profile.



The Physiognotrace was first put up in my father’s Museum, and was long one of the attractive features of that institution, under the management of the well known “Moses.” My father, coming from Maryland to the Quaker City, brought with him a family of slaves, whom he shortly after manumitted, except Moses, the eldest boy, who being too lazy to work, my father

was compelled to keep in bondage, with the promise or rather *threat* that as soon as he should show himself capable of self-maintenance, he should be free; but capable or not, at eight and twenty he should give him his discharge—meanwhile he had to maintain the whole lazy and improvident family of blacks in their freedom. It is a curious fact, that until the age of 27, Moses was entirely worthless: but on the invention of the Physiognotrace, he took a fancy to amuse himself in cutting out the rejected profiles made by the machine, and soon acquired such dexterity and accuracy, that the machine was confided to his custody, with the privilege of retaining the fee for drawing and cutting. This soon became so profitable, that my father insisted upon giving him his freedom one year in advance. In a few years he had amassed a fund sufficient to buy a two-story brick house, and actually married my father's white cook, who, during his bondage, would not permit him to eat at the same table with her.

The practice of Moses was, on a half sheet of folded paper, to cut out four profiles at once—himself reserving the *blocks*; and so extensive was his business that I have seen two barrels full of these inner sections, which he called his *blockheads*—among which were frequently found, by careful search, the likenesses of many a valued friend or relative, and sometimes of distinguished personages—another source of profit to him.

The Physiognotrace, thus made popular at the Museum, was purchased by many an itinerant but humble *artist*, who travelled over all the States, making a good living, and some indeed a small fortune. Of late years the instrument has been but little used, but the shades are still in humble demand, executed by many a self-taught *genius*, who deserves the name of *artist* quite as well as the *dancers* of the opera house who have usurped the title.

On establishing himself in London, Mr. West selected a retired street in the West End—himself the only artist in that quarter—but such was the effect of his growing celebrity, that *Newman Street* finally became a street of artists, and their studios in the greatest demand. Under his profile we give a fac-simile of his card, as written by himself, and we here take occasion to speak of the custom in regard to cards and doorplates. The luxury of copperplate cards was seldom seen, as it was esteemed a personal kindness to present the autograph as an invitation fresh from the living hand. Now the fine polished card and elegant copperplate engraving mark a higher style of civility and embellish the card-basket. The simple name of Mr. on the doorplate indicated an artist and a gentleman, whilst the prefix of a baptismal name implied a tradesman. Mr. Lawrence was sufficient for this celebrated painter; but when he was elected President of the Royal Academy and was knighted, his door-plate was changed to *Sir Thomas Lawrence*.

Rembrandt Peale.

PICTURE SUBJECTS.—Hartley Coleridge says, “The life of Ben Jonson presents at least one striking situation, which would make a fine picture, either on the stage or on canvas. I allude to that juncture, when, amid a company of friends assembled to congratulate him on his discharge from prison, his mother produced the packet of poison, which she meant to have given him, had he been sentenced to the pillory and mutilation, for his reflections on the king's countrymen (the Scotch).”

P.

Landscape-Gardening.

NOT TECHNICAL.—BUT PRACTICAL.

The author of a late publication, entitled “Thoughts, Feelings, and Fancies,” remarks, “that persons doing business in large cities, should have their residence a ‘short distance out of them, where, in the quiet and ‘retirement of a rural home, they can review the events ‘of each busy day, and link the life contemplative to the ‘life practical.” The idea here embodied is sound philosophy, *so far as it goes*, but taking rural homes as we generally find them, they fall far short of supplying the needs of persons doing business in large cities, or, indeed, of any class of persons habitually spending a portion of their time in the country.

Unless the “rural home” and its surroundings are arranged upon such principles as to afford something beyond “quiet and retirement” (which may certainly be desirable elements), it will totally fail in the effect which a daily contact with Nature ought to produce, and be of no more value in the normal development of the mental and spiritual man, than the same measure of mere repose would be, obtained under other conditions. The “rural home,” to fulfill the best purposes of which it is capable, must possess in addition to its negative recommendation of “quiet,” those positive elements of beauty which recuperate the mind, and add tone and stimulus to the idealistic and imaginative faculties; as mere rest only revives and strengthens the physical system, it is of no other value to the human inhabitant than it is to his horse or the horned cattle of his barn-yard. “Quiet and retirement,” and the means for “linking the life contemplative with the life ‘practical,” may be found in a city attic, where, by virtue of a barred door, one may become oblivious to all the outer world and its concerns—there is no “retirement” more absolute than that of self-isolation in the midst of abounding and busy life. But the man of business, occupied as he is for the greater portion of his waking hours, in the constant rivalries of trade or commerce—compelled by the pressure of competition and usage, if not by his own avaricious instincts, persistently to shut his eyes and ears, during the time set apart for business, to every sound and subject save those out of which dollars may be coined, surely needs something more when released from these inexorable demands, than “quiet and retirement.” He needs at least some mental aliment, which is responsive to that other side of his nature, which he is forbidden to exercise while under the magic spell of “business.” He needs for the nourishment and expansion of his aesthetic and moral nature, not only a refined social intercourse, but also the proximity of scenes and objects, calculated to draw out those God-given faculties, which he has no right utterly to suppress, but which during the money-getting hours he must keep in abeyance, if not absolutely ignore.